

COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

DATE April 16, 1976

TO: Honorable Board of Supervisors

FROM: M. D. Tarshes, County Manager

SUBJECT: Proposed Reorganization

RECOMMENDATION:*County govt San Mateo Co.*

That your Board:

1. Approve the plan for reorganization of certain county activities as proposed in the attached report and authorize the establishment of the two new department head positions.
2. Direct the County Manager and the Personnel Director to prepare job specifications for the two new department head positions, and to initiate preliminary steps necessary to fill these positions.
3. Direct the County Manager and the District Attorney to prepare and submit for your consideration any ordinances and resolutions which may be necessary to implement the reorganization.
4. Direct the District Attorney to prepare for your consideration drafts of the Charter amendments proposed in the attached report.

SUMMARY

San Mateo County government suffers from a proliferation and fragmentation of administrative units. In many instances, this hampers effective operations by dividing the attention of the Board of Supervisors and top management and by inappropriate use of their time. Essential coordination is often lacking or is provided through staff personnel who do not have the authority to require necessary follow-up and implementation. Communication is frequently difficult to achieve because of the large number of administrative "answering points". These problems

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are continually being compounded by the ever-increasing list of important subjects competing for the time of top policy-making and administrative officials.

To reduce the severity of these problems it is proposed that part of county government be reorganized by merging some activities into two new departments and shifting certain other activities between departments. The proposal includes as many needed changes as is practical under existing provisions of the County Charter and state law.

Specifically, it is proposed to create an Environmental Management Department and a Community Services Department; to centralize internal service activities in a General Services Department, the successor to the present Building Construction and General Services Department; and to somewhat modify the functions of the present County Engineer Department and give it the title of Department of Public Works.

No change is proposed at this time for the Department of Health and Welfare. Neither is any change proposed for those departments headed by elective officials.

The proposed organization change would not require a net increase in positions. The addition of two new department head positions would be offset by the deletion of two positions in the County Manager's Office as vacancies occur after the organization change is implemented.

The proposal would be accompanied by other changes designed to improve communication and coordination; the establishment of an Executive Council, a cabinet-style group of about ten key department heads which would meet frequently and would provide an opportunity for improved communication among top management personnel and with members of the Board of Supervisors; and an Operations Council which would broaden the participation of all levels of management personnel in review and development of policies and procedures.

Several proposals to amend the Charter are also submitted for your Board's consideration. These would provide you with more authority and flexibility to make any subsequently needed organization-related changes.

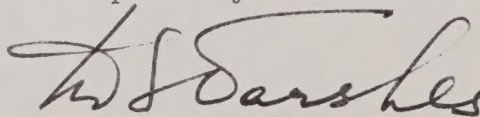
The proposed reorganization would not cure all of the county's administrative problems -- reorganization cannot do that. It would, however, permit an important degree of improvement by providing a better framework for communication and coordination -- and should provide experience to help judge the need for further changes. I believe that it deserves your approval, and I hope that you will make a decision in a relatively short period of time.

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Respectfully submitted



M. D. TARSHES

A PROPOSED REORGANIZATION PLAN FOR SAN MATEO COUNTY

GENERAL BACKGROUND

County government in California has had many organizational problems imposed upon it over the years of its existence:

- Originally organized as extensions of state government to deal largely with ministerial functions and needs, counties have been assigned many new functions over the years reflecting the public's demand for increased governmental services.
- In the past thirty years, along with rapid population growth, counties have been given the responsibility for many municipal functions formerly performed only, or mainly, by cities. Also, as urban problems have become accentuated, counties in densely populated areas have been faced with many new and increased functions.
- As a result of these and other factors, counties have become fragmented conglomerates with thirty or more separate departments plus numerous boards and commissions.
- Under state law as well as many county charters, the election of numerous department heads has had the tendency to fragment political accountability and detract from the authority of the governing board.
- State laws and charter provisions also tend to fragment and disperse administrative authority, thus operating against the type of central management which is the usual pattern in private business.
- The public has maintained a characteristic reluctance to centralize organizational authority in government and a general view that fragmented authority is a desirable method of providing checks and balances without regard to costs.

LOCAL BACKGROUND

Until recent years, the San Mateo County government was able to cope adequately with its administrative problems and there was no great pressure for change in its organizational structure because:

- Public assistance, social services, medical care, mental health, and public health activities, which are ordinarily involved in some of the major problems in county government, had already been consolidated by an original Charter provision into a single Depart-

ment of Health and Welfare. This relieved the Board of Supervisors and the County Manager of the responsibility for coordination of these important activities by delegating that responsibility to the Director of the department.

- The Board of Supervisors to some extent has reduced the problem of county government fragmentation by several departmental consolidations -- Treasurer-Tax Collector, Clerk-Recorder (including the Registrar of Voters function already assigned to the Clerk), assignment of the Public Guardian function to the Coroner-Public Administrator, and the consolidation of a number of internal service activities within the Department of Building Construction and General Services. These changes, and the Health and Welfare consolidation, have left our county with 28 departments, fewer than in most counties.
- In some activities which normally produce many problems for counties, such as public assistance and law enforcement and corrections, caseloads in San Mateo County have been lower on a per capita basis than in other urban California counties.
- San Mateo County has had a high tax base, with a solid industrial and commercial component, as well as other financing resources which have been helpful in coping with problems.
- While the Board of Supervisors has been progressive in recognizing new problems, its conservative approach toward staffing county activities, which is apparent in comparisons with other urban counties, has helped the present organization to work by minimizing its size and its number of layers.
- Generally speaking, there has been a good quality of management by county department heads.

THE PRESENT PROBLEM

It has become increasingly apparent that the organizational structure of San Mateo County government is not designed to permit the Board of Supervisors and its top management to cope adequately with the responsibilities and problems which have been added in recent years. Changes have taken place which make it very difficult for an organization with 28 departments, and the other characteristics which decentralize administrative authority, to operate as effectively as is required by current conditions.

- Many new programs and major program changes have arrived on the county government scene in the past few years both by local choice and by federal and state command. These have claimed a great deal of management time and have complicated even further the already complex structure and responsibilities of county government. The most prominent examples include:

- Housing and Community Development
 - Manpower Planning and Administration
 - General Revenue Sharing
 - Parks and Open Space Acquisition and Development
 - Formal labor relations
 - Consumer protection programs
 - Added complexities in medical care
 - Equal employment and affirmative action requirements
 - Environmental protection statutes
 - Law enforcement assistance grants

- Intergovernmental relationships within the county and in the Bay Area also have been further complicated by some of these new programs and by public pressures for improved services.
- Public involvement and participation in many programs, including most of those mentioned above, has been increased by federal and state requirements, thus making the process more complex and time consuming.
- Public expectations of performance by local governments have grown at a rapid, often unrealistic, pace. This has been increased by economic pressures and the growing public concern about rapidly escalating government costs resulting from inflation and the ever-expanding list of government activities. At the same time, various segments of the public have requested still more services and benefits, often using federal funds temporarily made available for new programs -- and they also have pressed the county to add local funding and to participate more actively. Still more recently, the ability of policy makers and administrators to cope with problems has been hampered by the pervasive post-Watergate attitudes of cynicism and mistrust.
- The ever-accelerating pace of change has imposed on all persons great demands to accommodate and adjust and has added greatly to the community stresses with which local government officials must cope.

- Workloads in many programs, particularly those involved with law enforcement and corrections, are now growing at a much higher rate than our population. This is true throughout the country but seems to be particularly applicable in San Mateo County where our relatively low rates of previous years now seem to be approaching those of other communities.

THE NEED FOR REORGANIZATION

These and other related changes have made it apparent that we must re-evaluate many of our approaches, and the tools we have available for our use, in coping with a large variety of problems. The Board of Supervisors recognized in 1975 that a new look at the organization structure is essential. The Board instructed the County Manager to examine the present organization and submit recommendations for changes.

In large part, the Board is concerned about this subject because it has become apparent that time demands on Board members and top management personnel have increased to the point where it is not possible to give adequate attention to the growing variety of high priority subjects. As a result, the activities of these top officials are becoming more crisis oriented ("putting out fires") with less time available for planning and orderly development of long-term solutions.

Organization change is not a cure-all for our problems, but it can be helpful in permitting more effective use of the time of policy makers and top management -- and it can help to create conditions which will permit us to cope with some of the serious problems described in the following paragraphs:

1. The large number of county departments causes an excessive dispersion of top level management attention and does not adequately permit identification of, and accountability for, key management responsibilities.

San Mateo County government includes 28 separate departments organized to perform their own special programs. The departments vary in size from six employees to about 2000 employees and they vary considerably in scope, impact, and complexity of programs. The departments also vary greatly in the resources available to them to identify and solve problems. Some of them must seek guidance and assistance from the County Manager and service departments while others are capable of handling similar problems themselves or with minimal aid. Proposals submitted to the County Manager for administrative action or to the Board of Supervisors for policy decision differ widely in quality, at times causing the utilization of staff personnel time in the Manager's Office to do work that should be handled by persons with line-management responsibility. With clamor for attention coming from so many sources, the County Manager cannot always be adequately selective in deciding administrative priorities, and it is inevitable that some departments and problems do not receive enough top management attention.

2. There is often lack of adequate coordination between departments.

Our present fragmented organization makes it very difficult to obtain the much-needed degree of coordination between related activities. Departments very often rely on the County Manager's Office to provide interdepartmental coordination, but growing time demands for other responsibilities make it impossible to continue to fulfill this role properly. Moreover, this has often imposed responsibilities on staff personnel who do not have the line (command) authority to see that the necessary work is accomplished. To help solve this problem we need to build into the organization a greater potential for coordination by assigning broader line responsibility to fewer key administrators.

3. Increased demands on the time of the members of the Board of Supervisors and the County Manager make it increasingly difficult to give enough attention to some activities and to the needs for planning to avert problems.

The accelerated pace of program changes, the addition of new programs, greater public involvement and expectations, increased complexity of intergovernmental relationships, and other factors mentioned in this report have combined to place substantial demands upon the time of the Board members and County Manager. This makes it necessary to establish key administrative managers who can be depended upon to perform with minimum direction, to provide guidance to subordinate activities, and to participate in the development of administrative plans and policy proposals on a non-crisis basis. This will also give managers of the relatively small activities better access to top management.

4. Consultation with department heads on common problems is often difficult and ineffective because of the large number and variety of departments.

A reduction in the number of departments by merging some of them into larger departments will permit the establishment of a cabinet-type organization consisting of the key administrators. This group can be looked to for development of answers to common problems, to suggest general administrative improvements, and to provide an opportunity for key administrators to gain a broader perspective of county government needs and priorities. It can also be an important device for improving communication between the top administrative staff and the members of the Board of Supervisors.

THE REORGANIZATION PROPOSAL

In considering a problem which can be addressed through organizational change, we should keep in mind that the options are limited. To build into the organization more ability for coordination by key administrative officials and more top management

attention to certain activities, there appear to be only two feasible approaches:

1) The creation of an agency structure superimposed upon groups of related departments; or 2) the merger of groups of related departments into larger departments. I am proposing the latter approach.

Organizations should be dynamic -- that is, responsive to continuing changes in conditions. This proposal in itself is a significant change, but it may be the first in a series of organization changes to take place over a period of several years. However, there is no point at this time in trying to specify what the future changes should be since their form will undoubtedly be affected by interim events. Moreover, the evaluation of the changes now being proposed will be an important element in determining future changes.

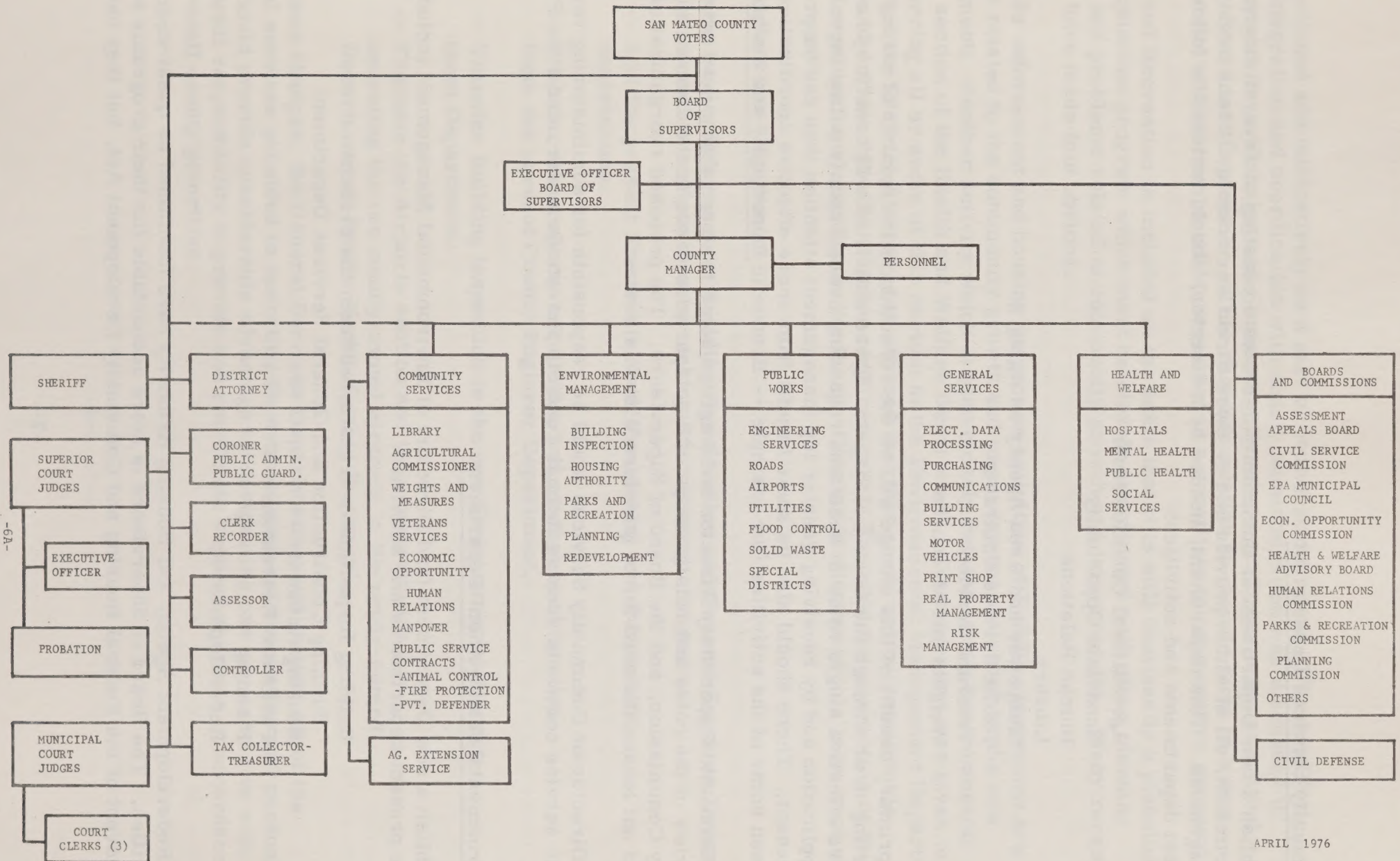
The proposal discussed in the following sections of this report is for an organization change affecting some but not all of the present departmental lines of authority. Many of those departments which frequently work closely with the Board and Manager's Office are most affected. They are among those which have the greatest need for interdepartment communication and coordination. Some departments are included in this proposal primarily to reduce the number of officials reporting directly to the County Manager and the Board of Supervisors.

This proposal goes only as far toward coping with the problems already defined as can be done without changes in the County Charter or state law. It is intentionally designed that way so that important changes can be made immediately -- and because it is more likely that this type of partial change can be successfully handled than one which would attempt to completely modify the entire organization in a short period of time. We should avoid the breakdown of communications and the organizational shock which has occurred in many public and private agencies as a result of massive reorganizations.

The basic concept of this proposal is to realign related functions within the present departmental structure and to consolidate some departments and activities into a single department. It follows the successful model used in the past in the Health and Welfare Department and the Building Construction and General Services Department, although the latter would be modified somewhat in this proposal.

The proposed rearrangement of services under the key managers is shown on the organization chart on the following page. The functions and activities in each consolidated department are shown only for the purpose of description, but not to specify internal departmental organization which can be modified. I am sure that each department head and other key staff will want to make some changes from time to time.

The following is a description of the major changes included in this proposal:



Community Services Department

Establish a new Department of Community Services consisting of several existing departments, all of which provide one or more direct services to citizens or outside agencies. This department, headed by a director, should include the following present departments and activities:

- Agricultural Commissioner
- Economic Opportunity
- Human Relations
- Library
- Manpower and Area Agency on Aging
- Public Service Contracts
- Veterans Service
- Weights and Measures

The primary benefit of this change will be the reduction in the number of managers reporting to or through the County Manager. These activities will benefit by having a more effective single voice in decisions regarding overall county policy formulation or application and by receiving greater top management attention than can be provided at present. There should also be some benefit from more effective coordination between some of the activities (for example -- Economic Opportunity and Manpower).

The Economic Opportunity Director and I agreed some time ago that a need exists for a review of the roles and relationships of his department's staff, the Economic Opportunity Commission, and the Board of Supervisors. The proposed reorganization would not lessen the need for or interfere with this review.

The Director of Community Services would be responsible for administering various public service contracts such as Animal Control, Private Defender, and Fire Protection.

Environmental Management Department

Establish a new Department (and Director) of Environmental Management including these present departments and activities:

- Building Inspection -- transferred from the present
Building Construction and General Services Department
- Housing Authority
- Parks and Recreation
- Planning
- Redevelopment

The Redevelopment Agency and Housing Authority have functioned as quasi-county activities. The Board of Supervisors is more accountable for their programs since the advent of the Federal Housing and Community Development Act, but they have

not functioned administratively as a part of county government. The need for their integration and coordination with county administration was discussed in the proposal for a Planning and Community Development Department submitted to your Board last September. This recommendation to include them in a new Department of Environmental Management is a substitute for the earlier proposal.

Parks and Recreation is included on the basis that it is still dominantly a planning and acquisition program which must be closely coordinated with other planning issues and problems related to community growth and improvement. Many recent events have made this obvious.

The code enforcement and housing inspection activities of Building Inspection are closely related to the community growth and improvement activities in the new department. Another activity which is also closely related is the Environmental Health section of the Health and Welfare Department. Consideration was given to transferring all or some of this section to the Environmental Management Department, but the District Attorney has advised that this would not be permissible because of certain specific Charter requirements. The need for correction of this type of organizational rigidity in the County Charter is discussed in a later section of this report.

General Services Department

Change the name of the present Building Construction and General Services Department and revise its composition by making the following changes:

- Add the present Electronic Data Processing and Purchasing departments.
- Transfer the property acquisition and management function from the present County Engineer Department.
- Transfer Building Inspection to the new Environmental Management Department.
- Transfer the Airports section and the responsibility for operating the two county-owned airports to the newly-named Department of Public Works (County Engineer).

With these changes, the General Services Department would include all of the internal services provided to operating departments except accounting and personnel. This should provide considerable advantage by designating one key executive with the overall responsibility to provide and coordinate support services in accordance with overall county priorities.

Except for civil engineering activities (discussed under Public Works) this department would retain the architectural and engineering responsibilities related to county owned and leased buildings. This is essentially an internal service activity which is closely related to the building maintenance and custodial responsibilities of the department. The director of this department would retain his present responsibilities related to the planning and coordination of capital improvements for county buildings.

The title of the present Director of Building Construction and General Services, Henry P. Tarratt, would be changed to Director of General Services.

Public Works Department

Rename the present County Engineer Department to Department of Public Works and make the following changes:

- Transfer the responsibility for county airport operations from the present Building Construction and General Services Department.
- Centralize all civil engineering activities in this department. This would include all of the present civil engineering work now done in the department as well as any work such as roads, parking lots, grading, and drainage related to all county facilities. Some of this work would be done on a service basis for the Department of General Services.
- Transfer the property acquisition and management function to the General Services Department.

The County Engineer, Sidney H. Cantwell, Jr., would be the Director of Public Works.

Health and Welfare Department

No change is proposed in this department at this time. If the Charter is changed to make this possible, consideration should be given to the transfer of Environmental Health to the new Department of Environmental Management.

It is worth mentioning here that the creation many years ago of this large, consolidated department has benefited the county in many ways. I have personally observed, as examples, that its health care and social service activities are coordinated much more effectively than in other counties where the functions included in this department are fragmented into four or more departments. In San Mateo County we are able to rely on the Director of the department, instead of the County Manager and his staff, to assume the responsibility for coordination. This is one of the important objectives of the departmental consolidation proposals in this report.

Remaining Departments and Activities

No change is proposed for the following departments with appointed department heads:

- Personnel -- The Charter provides that the Personnel Director is appointed by the Civil Service Commission. Because of the importance of the personnel function to the management of all county activities, it is essential for this department head to function as an administrative arm of the County Manager. The Charter should be amended to provide for the appointment of the Personnel Director by the County Manager. In the interim the director should function as an administrative adviser and staff assistant to the Manager, as has been generally true in the past.
- Civil Defense -- Because this is a joint city-county activity it has not been proposed to include it in a consolidated department -- although, if the Board desires, it could be placed for general direction in the Department of Community Services.
- Agricultural Extension Service (Farm Advisor) -- The head of this department is an employee of and appointed by the University of California and, therefore, could not be placed under the administrative direction of a county department head. However, the Director of Community Services would be expected to assist in coordinating departmental activities with the Farm Advisor.
- Probation -- The Chief Probation Officer is appointed by the judges of the Superior Court. The present incumbent has made it a practice to work closely and cooperatively with the County Manager and other county departments so that coordination with the activities of the Probation Department has not been a problem. In any event, the appointment of the department head by elective officials makes it unfeasible to merge the department with other departments.
- Other court officers -- The Executive Officer of the Superior Courts and the three municipal court clerks are also appointed by elective judges.

The remaining department heads are elected officials under provisions of the County Charter and are therefore directly responsible to the voters. Some of them perform duties which are entirely ministerial, with no policy-making responsibilities involved. Although no urgency is involved because of the generally cooperative attitudes and effective work of the incumbents, Charter amendment proposals to change some of

these to non-elective positions should probably be presented to the voters from time to time. Approval of such changes would permit further organizational changes which might appear to be desirable.

Boards and Commissions

I do not anticipate that the reorganization proposal would have any effect upon the operation of the various boards and commissions appointed by your Board. Most of these boards and commissions are advisory to your Board, and there is nothing in the proposal that would modify that relationship. There is no reason to anticipate any change in their working relationships with administrative officials. Although departments such as Economic Opportunity, Human Relations, Parks and Recreation, and Planning would be parts of new departments, they would continue to provide staff services to their respective commissions.

Selection and Salaries of Key Officials

As has already been indicated, the proposed organization changes would require the establishment of two new department head positions -- the directors of Environmental Management and Community Services. In developing the specifications for these positions with the Personnel Director, it would be my intention to establish general, non-specialized educational and experience requirements. The objective would be to select persons for these positions on the basis of general managerial ability, without regard for any specialized, professional background. In my view, the present department heads, other persons in county administrative and staff positions, and persons from outside of county government could compete for these positions. The salaries for the new positions should be set at about the same level as the Assistant County Manager.

Any clerical or staff assistance needed by the new department heads should be obtained from existing positions in the activities under their direction.

In the absence of any major change in responsibility, the salaries of the department heads and other supervisory personnel whose activities would become part of a major department should not be modified as a result of the organization change.

Effect on County Manager's Office

A more consolidated county organization reducing the top level span of control from 28 to 19 should make it possible to reduce the staff in the County Manager's Office and to modify to some extent the nature of the staff's activities.

The heads of the major departments would have frequent contact with the Board of Supervisors and the County Manager, and therefore the communication and coordination role of the County Manager's staff should be considerably reduced. The proposed change should help to move in the direction of a larger proportion of the management

analyst work being done in and by the operating departments. There would remain in the County Manager's Office the need to perform this role to some extent with respect to other departments, and the office would continue to carry other central management responsibilities. It appears to me that the reduced coordination workload should permit a decrease of at least two positions in the Manager's Office.

The remaining staff in the County Manager's Office would continue to perform the following functions:

- Assistance to the members of the Board of Supervisors by obtaining and providing information and performing special assignments to the extent possible.
- Leadership and coordination of day-to-day financial planning and monitoring of county-wide financial status. This responsibility will probably be centralized in a budget and fiscal section.
- Annual budget review and preparation of the budget recommendations.
- Coordination and liaison with non-consolidated departments.
- Assistance, when necessary, to all department heads in coordinating particularly difficult and significant multi-department subjects.
- Investigate matters of importance to all county departments and the Manager in developing recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.
- Work with the Personnel Director and contract negotiator in matters involving employee relations and negotiations with employee organizations.
- Coordinate and monitor the county's legislative program.
- Assist the County Manager in carrying out his responsibilities including staff level relationships with cities, other units of local and regional government, and citizen groups and organizations.
- Continuous review of county operations on a planned basis.
- Provide the centralized public information program.

Other Improvements

With a smaller number of departments it would be feasible to develop other administrative improvements. There are two specific features I proposed to establish if the revised organization is approved:

1. A cabinet-type group called the Executive Council. This would consist of about ten top executives under the chairmanship of the County Manager. Included in the group would be the heads of the five merged departments, Personnel Director, District Attorney (legal advisor), Assistant County Manager, and two or three of the remaining department heads (perhaps on a rotating basis). The Executive Council would meet regularly and frequently to discuss matters of general interest. The major objectives would be to give everyone involved the benefit of the opinions and advice of all members of the group and to encourage the department heads to develop a broad county perspective going beyond the specialized interest of their departments.

Some or all of the Executive Council meetings could involve the participation of committees of two Board members. Such meetings could enhance communication between the Board of Supervisors and key administrative staff through discussion of specific agenda subjects and free-wheeling discussion of subjects of general interest.

2. An Operations Council consisting of perhaps 30 persons representative of top- and middle-management positions. This group would meet on a regularly scheduled basis but probably less frequently than the Executive Council. The main objectives would be to improve communication within the management group and to develop suggestions for improvements in county policies and procedures. Ad hoc committees would probably be formed from this group and other management personnel to review and develop recommendations on subjects of general county interest.

CHARTER AMENDMENTS

There are several Charter changes related to the general subject of organization which should be considered for placement on the November 1976 ballot. The priority of these proposed amendments should be evaluated along with other Charter changes which will be presented to your Board for consideration — but I will outline them here for your preliminary review.

1. Authority for the Board of Supervisors to have complete flexibility in consolidating, grouping, and separating all county activities except those headed by elective officials.

Justification -- The Charter now contains a number of provisions, some of them dating back to 1933, which hamper the Board's ability to organize the county government to best meet current needs. An example is the inability to separate any part of the Environmental Health activity from the Department of Health and Welfare. Another example is the Charter's treatment of the Building Inspector as a department head position. The Board of Supervisors, elected by all of the voters to govern San Mateo County, should have the ability to make the county's organizational structure responsive to continually changing needs.

2. Authority for the Board of Supervisors to determine the method of appointment of all non-elective department heads and other key officials.

Justification -- At the present time, the Charter provides for appointments of department heads by a variety of methods -- by the Board of Supervisors, other elected officials, County Manager, and commissions. This is confusing and makes it extremely difficult to develop an integrated and coordinated administrative organization. Moreover, it should be possible for the Board to implement organizational changes by making necessary changes in the appointing authority. As an example, a provision of this type would enable the Board to specify appointment of the Personnel Director by the County Manager.

3. Authority for the Board of Supervisors to remove from the classified Civil Service all department heads, assistant department heads, and other key administrative positions. This would not affect incumbents who now have tenure as classified employees in these positions but would affect persons appointed to these jobs after the effective date of the Charter change. The Board should also have the authority to establish criteria for determining compensation for these positions, including demonstrated competency and departmental efficiency. The Charter should continue to specify that such positions be filled on the basis of demonstrated merit.



Justification -- The public expects the elected governing body and the top management to operate the county effectively. In order to be able to fulfill this expectation, and to match their responsibility with the authority to carry it out, they should have the ability to dismiss key administrative officials without any right of appeal. Although this has not often been a crucial problem, the present Charter provisions which include almost all appointed department heads in the classified service could seriously limit the ability to function effectively. Persons in top administrative positions should not expect or need the protection of Civil Service tenure. They ordinarily are protected from arbitrary or capricious actions by a relatively high degree of visibility, and the source of their security is the ability to perform their responsibilities in a high-quality manner.

Although it is difficult in a public setting to develop and effectively administer a management compensation plan keyed to performance, it is a desirable goal which should not be prevented by Charter provisions which apply to compensation of employees.